Healthy Aging for All In the 21st Century - Discussion Paper

GOVERNMENT OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

March 2006

This document was produced by the:

Division of Aging and Seniors
Department of Health and Community Services
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
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Cover Photos:

© Department of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs. Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (Woman and child)

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Thanks also to the Mount Pearl Seniors' Independence Group.

Information Sources:

Please refer to our Seniors Profile for a list of information sources.

MESSAGE FROM THE PREMIER

The establishment of a healthy aging framework is a priority for our government. While 13.4 per cent of our population is currently over the age of 65, it is anticipated that by 2016 seniors will represent 19.7 per cent of our population. This means that within ten years, Newfoundland and Labrador will have the highest percentage of people over the age of 65 in our country.

That is why our government is committed to planning today to ensure that the needs of our aging population are well understood and met in the future.

While out-migration and a low birth rate have impacted on the aging of our population, technological and health advances have contributed to people living longer. Further, many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have chosen to return home in their retirement years.

Today's seniors contributed and continue to make a tremendous contribution to the growth and prosperity of our province. Our government recognizes the wisdom and skills of seniors and we remain committed to identifying and addressing the complex and diverse needs of an aging population. The development of this framework offers an opportunity to identify and build on the many strengths, attributes and accomplishments of our aging population throughout the whole lifespan.

The input of many partners, such as individuals, families, friends, groups, communities, researchers, health providers and governments is required in developing a healthy aging framework. As a society, we must have a clear vision for the kind of future we want for our province and the role each one of us will play, especially our seniors.

Broad public participation in the development of this healthy aging framework is essential. Your input is necessary and I encourage you to become involved and share your knowledge, experience and insight in creating *Healthy Aging for All in the 21st Century*.

Sincerely,

Danny Williams, Q.C
Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador

MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER

The Department of Health and Community Services is pleased to take an active role in developing *Healthy Aging For All in the 21st Century.* As the lead minister for government on issues related to aging and seniors, as well as chair of the Ministerial Council on Aging and Seniors, I am committed to ensuring that a comprehensive, integrated healthy aging framework emerges.

My commitment to a healthy aging framework is demonstrated through the ongoing work of the Division of Aging and Seniors. The Division acts as a focal point for aging and seniors issues, as well as performs a coordinating function to ensure that a healthy aging lens is applied to policies and programs throughout government. The Interdepartmental Working Group on Aging and Seniors also ensures a seniors perspective is considered when planning for the future. I have asked Ross Wiseman, MHA, in his role as Parliamentary Secretary to the Department of Health and Community Services, and chair of the Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors, to facilitate this process and to guide development of the framework.

The Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors, consisting of seniors, and others with an interest in seniors issues, from all regions of our province plays an essential role in advising government on matters related to the quality of life of seniors, as well as facilitating public discussion.

This discussion paper, *Healthy Aging For All in the 21st Century,* is intended to act as "food for thought". It will be used to encourage discussion in the 16 consultations to be held in various areas of the province. If you are not able to attend a consultation, or would like to make additional comments, we encourage you to submit your thoughts through the feedback form located in this document. Results of these consultations and submissions will be discussed at a provincial forum in June 2006 at which time participants will be encouraged to identify priority issues. Our goal is to provide a reflective and comprehensive framework to guide us in the future.

As aging affects each and every one of us, I encourage all residents of our province to participate and contribute to this worthwhile initiative.

Sincerely,

J. L. Ottenheimer

JOHN OTTENHEIMER, Q.C., M.H.A.
St. John's East District
Minister

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INTRODUCTION

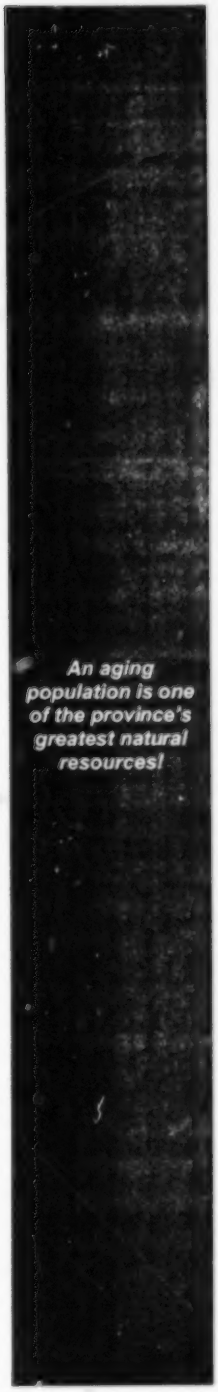
Growing older is sometimes looked at in a negative way with little thought given to the many positive things that life experience brings and the many opportunities it presents. Our population is aging at a fast pace. There are increasingly more older than younger people. While we know that our population has aged due to declining fertility rates and out-migration, we should also remember that increased life expectancy has made an important contribution. Long life is a goal we all cherish - something to celebrate - and we must be prepared for what this stage of life will bring.

> *Healthy aging is about adding life to years, not years to life. It is about being able to live our later years to the fullest with optimum health.*
>
> Minister Ottenheimer, November 26, 2004.

The aging population can be viewed as one of the province's greatest natural resources and it is growing. Just think of all the positive things an older population brings with it, particularly a wealth of wisdom and practical knowledge. Also, as we age, our perspective broadens, allowing us to see life from differing points of view. What wonderful qualities to be nurtured, especially in a society that focuses more and more on knowledge and understanding!

> *Healthy older persons are a resource for their families, their communities and the economy.*
>
> (World Health Organization, 1996.)

As our families mature, we have more time and opportunity to contribute to our communities in ways we could not before. We are now freer to participate in aspects of community life that will be enhanced because of our involvement.



An aging population is one of the province's greatest natural resources!

Services and programs must be appropriate and sustainable

In 10 years, one fifth of the population will be age 65+

It is important to remember that aging is not just about seniors. Aging affects us all. It shapes us as individuals, families and communities. It influences how our societal institutions - such as schools, workplaces, hospitals and governments - operate and respond. We need to take time to rethink how we plan our communities, housing developments, businesses and services to best support and recognize an aging population. As a society and a culture, we need to be clear on the kind of future we want for our province and strive to make it a reality.

Currently, it is estimated that 13.4 per cent of the provincial population (68,800 people) are age 65 or over. Seniors currently constitute the fastest growing segment of the population. According to Statistics Canada (2005), within ten years, Newfoundland and Labrador will have the highest proportion of individuals over the age of 65 in the country (19.7 per cent). It is projected that fifteen years from now, in 2021, half of the provincial population will be over the age of 49.

Indeed, population aging will look different for Newfoundland and Labrador than for the country as a whole. The entire country experienced a baby boom from 1946-1965. But our province has experienced a greater and longer reduction in the birth rate since the boom. In recent years, the decrease in population has been further impacted by out-migration. The number of seniors continues to increase as the population continues to decline.

People born during the baby boom are called baby boomers and they are the seniors of the future. (In fact, this year, the oldest of the "baby boomers", those born in 1946, will turn 60.) These baby boomer seniors will look different than the senior of today.

For example, they will have had greater opportunities to pursue formal education. Like the seniors of today, they will want to contribute to planning for their senior years.

The sheer number of baby boomers means that society will be challenged to change its usual ways and become more in-tune with the opportunities and concerns of an aging population. Knowing this, our government has consulted with seniors and seniors' organizations in the development of its policy agenda for seniors. It recognizes that it needs to embrace and prepare for an aging population.

In keeping with this realization and the outcome of discussions with seniors and seniors' organizations, we are now in a position to begin the development of a healthy aging framework for the province. This paper - **Healthy Aging for All in the 21st Century** - has been developed to focus discussion and debate around issues that have priority for our province. It is intended as one tool in a consultation process designed to reach consensus on the most effective actions and approaches to support healthy aging. It is hoped that many people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador will take the time to share their thoughts and ideas about what they think is right for our province.

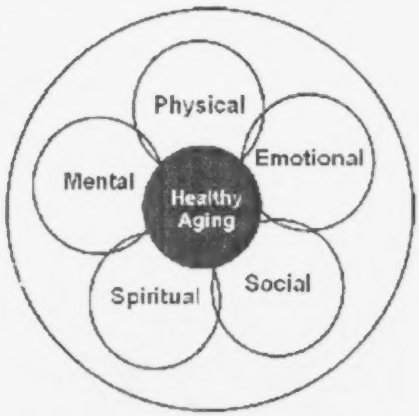
In 20 years, one quarter of the population will be age 65+

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to the development of a Healthy Aging Framework for the province

WHAT IS HEALTHY AGING?

So what is healthy aging? Perfect health is not a requirement for healthy aging. Yet, making the most of health is a key factor in successful and positive aging. All people can experience positive health and well-being even as they cope with, and manage, various impairments and health conditions. Learning to live well, in spite of one's limitations, is undoubtably a true mark of health and strength.

Healthy aging can best be seen as a process. It refers to creating the best opportunities for health, participation and security in order to enhance quality of life as we age. This process can be understood from an individual perspective, or from a collective perspective.



Components of Health

Healthy aging is inclusive of all people and entails a broad, holistic approach. It allows for unique and individual ways of growing older. It involves the physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual components of individual and collective well-being.

Factors that Determine Health

Over the last two decades national and international health organizations identified twelve, often inter-related, factors that determine the health of any population. These include factors over which individuals and society have some influence, such as personal coping skills, economic status and social supports. They also include factors over which individuals may have less influence, such as gender, biology and genetics, and the physical environment. The table below lists the factors that researchers and policy-makers have linked to health.

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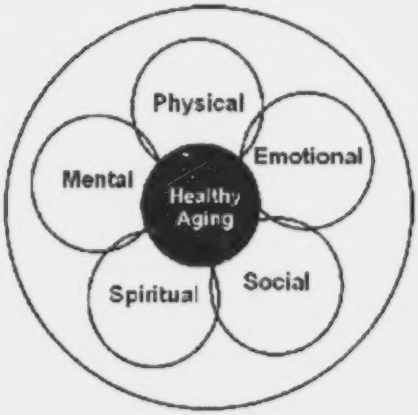

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FACTORS THAT DETERMINE HEALTH

- **Income and Social Status**
  The healthiest populations are those which are prosperous and have an equitable distribution of wealth. Income determines living conditions.
- **Social Support Networks**
  The support of family and friends can act as a buffer against stress and other health problems.
- **Education**
  Health status improves with level of education. Education equips people with a sense of control over life circumstances - a key factor in health.
- **Employment and Working Conditions**
  Unemployment, underemployment and stressful work are associated with poorer health.
- **Social Environments**
  Values and norms influence health and well-being. Social stability, respect for diversity, and freedom from violence contribute to a society with reduced health risks.
- **Physical Environments**
  Physical factors in the natural environment - air, water quality - and those in the human environment - housing, work safety - are key influences on health.
- **Biology and Genetic Endowment**
  We may be biologically predisposed, through the genes we inherit, to a wide range of individual responses that affect health status.
- **Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills**
  Healthy lifestyle practices, as well as people's knowledge, behaviors and coping skills for positively dealing with life, are key influences on health.
- **Healthy Child Development**
  The effect of prenatal and early childhood experiences on subsequent health, well-being, coping skills, and competence, is very powerful.
- **Health Services**
  Health services contribute to maintaining and promoting health, preventing disease, and restoring health and function.
- **Gender**
  Men and women experience different types of diseases at different ages. Also, many health issues are a function of gender-based social status or roles.
- **Culture**
  Some groups face additional health risks due to a socio-economic environment that is largely determined by dominant cultural values. Such an environment may offer limited access to culturally appropriate health services.

Adapted from the Public Health Agency of Canada website, 2006

These factors that determine health speak to the need for a far-reaching and integrated approach to support healthy aging.

As you can see, our evolving concept of healthy aging includes the components of health and the factors that determine health.

Partners in Healthy Aging

In developing a provincial policy framework, we recognize that there are many partners that support a healthy aging process: individuals; families/friends; communities; community organizations, including recreational and cultural groups; academics; researchers; the private sector; health and community service providers; and, governments.

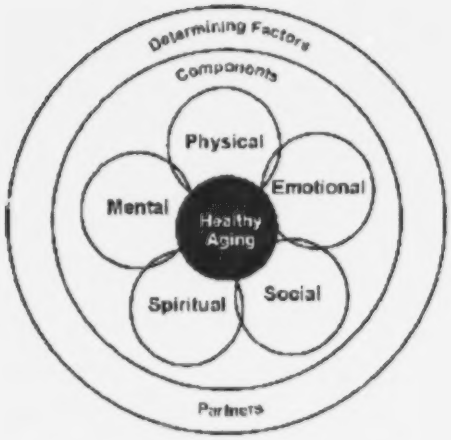
While all partners play an important role, the value of family and friends cannot be overstated. We tend to establish particularly strong bonds with family and friends - bonds that are built on basic human needs and desires. We rely on our family and friends, and vice versa, to help satisfy our basic needs.

Community organizations, including recreational and cultural groups, are well known to play a crucial role in the health of our communities across the province. They provide important services. They are a place where we can develop friendships and collaborative relationships, as we pursue common interests. They are also an outlet for self-expression. It is foreseen that as our population ages and the number of seniors grows, participation in such community organizations will flourish. As seniors tend to have more time available, compared to their middle years, community organizations will increasingly benefit.

Additional partners, including the corporate sector, governments and the health authorities, provide many of the services used by the aging population. They too need to plan and respond to the changes happening around us.

Also important is the role of academics in training the workforce of tomorrow, including caregivers, to take into account the aging population and its needs. Researchers also have an important function in ensuring a healthy aging population. We rely on their work to keep us informed of safe and healthy living practices. Gerontology, which refers to the study of aging, must be promoted and supported in the province.

Individuals, families/friends, and communities are integral to healthy aging.



So far, we have described the components of healthy aging (e.g. social, emotional, physical) as well as the factors that determine health (e.g. income, education, biology and genetic endowment). We have also acknowledged the many partners who work together to ensure healthy aging. Building on this together, we must adopt and follow a vision and a set of principles, in order to develop a Healthy Aging Framework for our province.

A VISION FOR HEALTHY AGING

A clearly defined vision identifies where we want to go. It inspires unity and helps people steer the course and stay focused, through rough and calm seas alike.

The vision of the Department of Health and Community Services is for individuals, families and communities to have achieved optimal health and well-being.

In keeping with this overarching vision, the vision of the Healthy Aging Framework is for individuals, families and communities to foster healthy aging in order to achieve optimal health and well-being.

Vision

For individuals, families and communities to foster healthy aging in order to achieve optimal health and well-being.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Dignity

Self-Fulfillment

Social Inclusion

Independence

Safety and Security

Fairness

PRINCIPLES OF HEALTHY AGING

To support healthy aging in the 21st century, we must have a strong set of guiding principles on which to base our thinking and planning as a society. The following principles will be used to guide our discussion:

- *Dignity*
  Being treated with respect regardless of the situation, being recognized for one's contributions, and having self-esteem.

- *Self-Fulfillment*
  Being able to pursue opportunities for the full development of one's potential with access to educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources.

- *Social Inclusion*
  Being accepted, and being able to participate fully within our families, our communities and our society.

- *Independence*
  Being in control of one's life, making one's own choices, and being able to do as much for oneself as possible.

- *Safety and Security*
  Having adequate income as one ages and having access to a safe and supportive living environment, including freedom from fear, exploitation and physical violence.

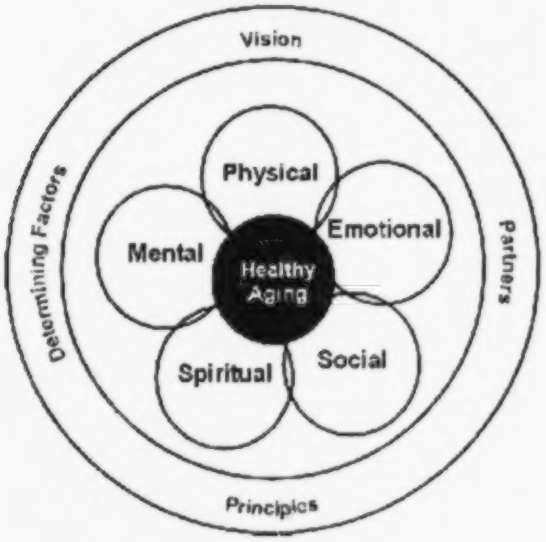
- *Fairness*
  Having one's needs, in all their diversity, considered equally with those of other people, regardless of age, gender, racial and ethnic background, disability, economic or other status.

Pause for Thought

1. Does this vision speak to your vision for healthy aging?

2. Do these guiding principles speak to your guiding principles for a healthy aging society?

We have presented the components of health and the factors that determine health, while also recognizing the many partners essential to healthy aging. Further, we have proposed a vision of healthy aging and principles to help guide us on our journey to develop a healthy aging framework. The themes in the upcoming section provide general information and help stimulate our thinking about how we believe a healthy aging framework will look! They are not meant to be the only considerations, but rather the beginning!



THEMES FOR DISCUSSION

Through discussions with seniors groups and other experts at the provincial, national and international levels, and a review of the literature on healthy aging, the following themes have been identified. They are consistent with the vision and principles we have adopted, and take into account the components of health, the factors that determine health and the partners essential to fostering healthy aging.

The discussion themes are as follows:

- recognition of older persons
- celebrating diversity
- supportive communities
- financial and personal security
- health and community services

RECOGNITION OF OLDER PERSONS

A first step to healthy aging in Newfoundland and Labrador is for society to show value for the wisdom and skills of seniors and to recognize the contributions they make to their families, communities and the province as a whole.

Research indicates that society holds many negative attitudes toward older people and the aging process. Negative stereotypes and myths about aging are communicated and reinforced in the media. We must finds ways to promote positive images that emphasize the strengths and positive attributes of older people and the upside of growing older. Creating a culture of respect and openness toward seniors is something that we can all take part in. In this regard, there is a lot to learn from how traditional aboriginal cultures value their elders.

Seniors have much wisdom to share and, with their years of experience, they have many skills that are in high demand. They have the energy and interest to contribute to their communities after retirement. This is demonstrated by the fact that they are the greatest contributors of volunteer time. Statistics show that residents of this province lead the country in volunteer hours and a large portion of this time is contributed by seniors. Given the wealth of knowledge and skills of seniors, opportunities to foster the transfer of that knowledge and those skills from one generation to another should be a high priority. Clearly, there is much to build on.

Pause for Thought

3. How can we, as a society, foster a positive image of aging?

4. What will relationships between generations look like in the future?

5. How do seniors contribute to your community or organization? How could they contribute differently in the future?

6. Does your community or organization recognize the contributions of seniors? If so, how?

How can we as a society foster a more positive image of aging?

Diversity is what makes life exciting!

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

We need to recognize that all seniors are not the same! We are not all alike and that helps make the world an interesting place! But we all need many of the same things.

As a province, we need to celebrate diversity among older persons by being responsive and respectful when it comes to differences, such as those based on gender, disability, heritage, income, age, and geography, to name a few.

The celebration of diversity is possible when, in spite of our differences, there is fairness and equality in how we are treated. The life experiences of a 65-year-old with a developmental disability may be very different from those of an 85-year-old retired dentist. Differences in these lives may be based on ability and income. They may even be based on gender. But both these people deserve to realize their needs and desires as they age.

In some regards, the situation of older women is different from that of older men. When one looks at the higher age brackets, a gender gap becomes apparent, with the proportion of single women increasing dramatically. In fact, single women are the largest group of seniors. In Canada, they are also the group of seniors most likely to be poor, compared to all male seniors and married female seniors.

Geographic distance is a factor that ought to be considered when exploring differences among seniors. For example, some of the communities in Labrador are disconnected from each other by road and rely on air and marine services for travel when it is not possible to travel by snowmobile.

Respect for differences is key to healthy aging

Now is the time to bring differences such as these to the forefront, with a view to considering how we create a more level playing field for all seniors.

Our diverse and cherished cultures are cause for celebration! The rich cultures of Newfoundland and Labrador are transmitted through the generations, through story-telling and song, thanks, in large part, to our seniors. There are certain cultural practices that pertain to rural areas, as opposed to more urban centres. Many of our cultural practices contribute to our sense of identity and belonging, which is part of good health. How can some of our cultural practices be maintained, adapted and transmitted as our communities age?

Indeed, we need to be aware of our province's cultural and spiritual practices, in all their diversity. And we need to be respectful of this diversity. For example, consultations with aboriginal groups will be an important part of identifying matters of importance to elders .

Pause for Thought

7. How can we recognize and support diversity in our aging population?
8. What is unique about older women? About older men?
9. What are the differences that exist among seniors ?
10. What are the experiences of seniors of urban areas and those of rural and remote areas?

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

Preliminary findings of a 2005 study by Statistics Canada indicate that 76.5 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians rate their sense of belonging to community as very, or somewhat strong, compared to 62 per cent of Canadians. This strong sense of belonging often translates into a spirit of mutual support. Newfoundland and Labrador has traditionally had a culture whereby families and communities supported individuals who needed some degree of assistance. This continues to be one of the finest hallmarks of our province.

Role of Family and Friends

While we distinguish ourselves by our strong sense of belonging and mutual support, we are nonetheless faced with diminishing levels of support. This is due to the changing structure of the family and the need for young adults to move away from home for employment. There are less people in smaller communities to lend a hand and those that remain are older and sometimes infirm. Social isolation and loneliness are still far too common to ignore. Like everybody, seniors generally want connectedness, and they want to be and feel safe. Focusing community efforts to support older adults, particularly those with physical, mental health and other health issues presents some real challenges. Church and community organizations are often sources of great strength. Furthermore, to ensure seniors live free from violence, crisis lines and other methods of outreach are also important resources.

How Can We Best Support Each Other?

Supporting individuals and families in making their own choices and assisting them in experiencing a good quality of life are shared responsibilities of governments, families, individuals and communities alike. Government's responsibility is to ensure that programs and services are available to meet the needs of the population, and that they are delivered in ways that are most

beneficial to all. Meanwhile, as a society, we could also look for new and innovative ways of supporting unpaid, informal caregivers, such as family and friends. We will all benefit when we continue to share responsibility for supporting those we care about.

Community Engagement

Municipal governments and community groups are two of the key influences within a community. They know well the strengths and challenges faced by its residents. It is essential to ensure that municipal governments and community organizations have a strong voice to communicate those strengths and challenges.

Planning for an aging population is an exciting opportunity to explore how seniors can fully participate in their community. The opportunity exists to improve how generations work, live, love, laugh and play together. Now is the time to promote social inclusion through volunteerism and inter-generational activities.

Often a community centre has much to offer in terms of satisfying the cultural, educational and recreational needs of a community, including its seniors. The full benefits will only be realized if a range of people, including seniors, take an active part in making them happen. In rural contexts, we have to overcome geographic and social isolation and related challenges in transportation to ensure the full participation of seniors in these hubs of community life. Ensuring that seniors are full participants in our community lives is an important goal in itself. It is also one step on the path to preventing elder abuse, a situation which often grows out of the vulnerability of socially isolated seniors.

How well has your organization or community planned for an aging population?

Education and Lifelong Learning

Education is seen less and less as something one undertakes only in one's early years. Society refers increasingly to the concept of lifelong learning: we are pursuing education throughout our lives.

Education levels are increasing in the province. In 2001, 58 per cent of the province's citizens aged 15 and over had a high school diploma. Unfortunately, most seniors in our province today do not have a high school diploma. But seniors of the future will indeed have had more opportunities and will therefore have higher levels of education than those of today.

Various levels of government and several non-profit organizations, including seniors groups, have been working to increase the levels of literacy among seniors. Together with some private sector partners, they have also been working to ensure that communication methods between service providers and senior consumers are appropriate. In fact, seniors have been speaking out on the need for clear communications to ensure full participation in community life. In their attempts to have their needs met, they have been strong advocates of the use of direct, clear language and user-friendly applications of technology in communications. We will all benefit from their advocacy in this area.

The Corporate Sector and the Aging Workforce

The corporate sector is also a community partner in healthy aging. Businesses supply an array of goods and services targeted to seniors and to younger adults planning for their future as seniors. These may include medical alert systems that help seniors live in safety, or registered retirement

investment funds, to name just a couple of examples. Businesses will be adapting their products in response to the changing market demands of the aging population.

Many of our citizens derive a sense of community from their workplaces . To this extent, building communities that are supportive of healthy aging involves businesses reconsidering their role as employers "in community". Be it in the corporate or public sector, employers will be challenged to examine their employment practices with a healthy aging lens. This may involve reconsideration of the particular needs of employees in terms of their stage in the life cycle. Out of this reconsideration may emerge special provisions such as leave for parental care responsibilities. It may also involve changing the requirement for mandatory retirement; incentives to postpone retirement, such as possibilities for part-time work; and training opportunities to allow older employees to update or add to their skills.

Living longer may involve taking a longer term view of leisure and work life. This, in turn, may encourage older workers to pursue more educational opportunities. Our institutions will continue to adapt in order to reflect the demand for life-long learning initiatives.

In all respects, now is the time for us to step up to ensure that our planning is responsive to an aging population.

Pause for Thought

11. What areas of lifelong learning are important to you, and why?

12. How can individuals, families and communities support seniors, in their homes and communities?

13. How can we prepare for an aging population, taking into account parental care, as well as child care?

14. How can your organization, community or business plan for an aging population?

FINANCIAL AND PERSONAL SECURITY

Financial security is an important part of healthy aging for us all. It provides peace of mind and leads to improved mental and physical health. It allows us to access social activities, transportation, programs and services, and housing, to name a few.

Income

How can we promote the financial security of seniors?

Recent research undertaken in the context of Government's Poverty Reduction Strategy indicated that Newfoundland and Labrador has the lowest rate of seniors in poverty compared with other provinces. When we compare seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador to other groups within our province, we find that the incidence of poverty is lower for seniors than for the population as a whole. Two per cent of seniors lived below the low-income cut-off in 2003, compared to eleven per cent of the general population. (The low-income cut-off for a single person in 2003 ranged anywhere from $10,821 to $13,990 after tax annual income, depending on the population size of the community where he or she lived.)

How can we financially prepare for our future?

The fact that a smaller proportion of seniors has a "low-income" compared to the overall population is in large part due to the federal pension plans to which seniors are entitled. These include Old Age Security, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, and the Canada Pension Plan. This being said, in 2003, 50 per cent of seniors in this province had a personal income of $14,900 or less, whereas 50 per cent of the general population had a personal income of $18,100 or less.

Over the past eight years, the rate of savings among Newfoundlanders and Labradorians has decreased by 5.7 percentage points. That compares to a decrease at the national level of 4.5 percentage points, over the same period of time. What are the implications for the seniors of tomorrow?

Are there policies and practices related to financial security that need to be reviewed in light of our rapidly aging population? For example, over the last few decades, some employers, including government itself, have required that employees retire when they turn 65. This may result in an unwanted decrease in income.

Also, single older women are generally poorer than older men and older married women. This is due to many factors that can be summarized by two global statements. Women have historically done more informal unpaid labour (child care and elder care, for example); and they have had less active and less profitable participation in the formal labour market.

Labour and workforce issues

How can we address financial differences based on gender?

Home Ownership and Housing

Seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador have a higher rate of homeownership than do seniors in the rest of Canada. While the relative value of these homes may be diminishing in rural areas, they are nonetheless important assets in many cases.

Healthy aging involves exploring a variety of arrangements to meet the diverse needs of seniors. It is often assumed that old age necessarily involves institutional living. This is a myth. Less than 7 per cent of Newfoundland and Labrador seniors currently reside in institutions.

Many seniors (84 per cent) live in their own homes. With a variety of supportive services (home care, help with shoveling, transportation to the grocery store), many seniors can continue to live in their homes despite physical limitations. Another alternative is for seniors to live relatively independently in their own units in a building where home care, nursing, supervisory and other support

services are available, if needed. In some cases, this can be an alternative to living alone at risk in a house. Yet another option is to live more communally in a personal care home or community care home where support services are also provided.

Transportation

Effective transportation systems can go a long way in supporting seniors in continuing to live independently and to participate actively in their home communities. With the aging of the population, greater numbers of older people have to stop driving because of health problems such as visual impairment, dementia, strokes and certain heart conditions. The need for accessible transportation, other than independent car ownership and driving, is growing.

Examples of the more formal transportation systems are the trans-island busing service and the municipal busing services of Corner Brook and St. John's, intended for the general public. There are also regional transportation services that use smaller buses or vans. In some regions, seniors can avail of busing services organized by non-profit organizations specifically for individuals who do not or cannot drive. Family, friends and other volunteers also generously share their time and resources by driving seniors to their various destinations, whether by car, boat or snowmobile.

In 1999, research in Atlantic Canada indicated that two thirds of male seniors but only one quarter of female seniors held driver's licenses. This indicates the higher level of dependency of women in terms of transportation.

The remoteness of communities throughout rural Newfoundland and most of Labrador presents challenges in the area of transportation. These have to do with the costs of maintaining the transportation infrastructure (airports, ferries, roads, and trails for snowmobiles and ATVs). Maintaining and improving this infrastructure is essential in ensuring transportation safety, a healthy food supply, and access to health and social services. The costs of accessing this infrastructure, as well as personal transportation services such as taxi and ambulance, can constitute a real challenge for some seniors.

We must strive to make a range of supports available, including affordable and safe housing and transportation.

Pause for Thought

15. How can we promote financial security for seniors in our province?
16. How can we financially prepare for our future?
17. What are your ideas about mandatory retirement?
18. How can we address financial differences based on gender?
19. How do we ensure that seniors can choose the most appropriate housing option among many?
20. What are the transportation issues of concern to seniors? What are the different transportation issues for seniors in rural, remote and urban areas?

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

There are two different types of health and community services in Canada: those that are guaranteed under the provincial legislation and are provided to all citizens free of charge (for example, physician services, hospital services, medical testing) and those which citizens must pay for, at least in part, from private funds (for example, medications, dental services, ambulance services). Provinces and territories may provide subsidization of these services to those whom it considers to not have the means to pay, as it does with the Prescription Drug Program.

The demand for existing programs and services is rising and new programs and services are being required. The costs of these programs and services are increasing. The provinces and territories are being challenged to financially sustain these services into the future. Individuals and families who have limited financial means can be challenged in trying to access them.

The best way to ensure health into the future is through prevention. The province has the highest rates of Type II diabetes and cardiac disease in the country. These diseases are often preventable. Healthier lifestyles could go a long way to decreasing their occurrence. But what about those persons who already have these and other conditions? We need to ensure that they can access programs and services they need to allow them to live life to their full potential.

Recently, a move toward more integrated Primary Health Care has been taking place in the province. This involves improving access to everyday health services. As part of this initiative, more interdisciplinary teams of health and community service providers have been established across the province. The role of Nurse Practitioners has been evolving. There is a strong focus on promoting health and wellness through a series of programs. Some key focus areas are: increasing physical activity, preventing injuries and reducing smoking.

Pause for Thought

21. How do we best ensure that health and community programs and services are fiscally sustainable and accessible?

22. How should we provide our health and community services to best meet the needs of an aging population?

23. How do we envision the delivery of health and community services and programs for seniors, in rural or remote, and urban areas?

PROGRESS TO DATE

You might ask what our Government has done so far to prepare for an aging population and to facilitate healthy aging. First of all, the Department of Health and Community Services was designated to coordinate all of Government's programs and services for seniors.

A Division of Aging and Seniors was established within the Department. It is a centre of expertise and a focal point for information on aging and seniors. It also performs a coordination function in ensuring that a healthy aging lens is applied to programs and policies throughout government.

Ministerial Council

Once the Division was in place, we appointed a Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors, comprised of seniors and others. This Council advises government on matters related to the quality of life for seniors, and facilitates public discussion on aging. Government also has established a Ministerial Council for Aging and Seniors, chaired by the Minister of Health and Community Services and composed of the Ministers responsible for: Finance; Justice; Human Resources, Labour and Employment; Housing; Women's Policy; Aboriginal Affairs; Tourism, Culture and Recreation; and the Rural Secretariat. Open dialogue among these Ministers will enable a broad approach to issues affecting seniors across the province.

The following is a sample of recent government initiatives that support healthy aging:

- Official recognition of June as Seniors Month.
- Indexation of the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit.

- Introduction of a tax reduction program for low income individuals and families, including seniors.

- A Home Heating Fuel Rebate of up to $400 for low income individuals and families, including seniors.

- Continued support to help low-income households, including seniors, repair their dwellings to minimum health and safety levels (Provincial Home Repair Program).

- Increase of supportive housing alternatives for seniors in partnership with the federal government (Affordable Rental Housing Program).

- Partnering with the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) to deliver a pilot project on palliative home care in the Corner Brook area.

- Provision of funding for detailed design and initial site work for new long term care homes in Clarenville and Corner Brook as well as planning and conceptual drawings for a new long-term care home in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

- Provision for a wage increase to Home Support Workers in recognition of the valuable contribution they make.

- Addition of new drugs to the list of drugs covered by the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program. This program provides a subsidy toward drug costs to residents that qualify. Some of these newly added drugs are used to treat arthritis, cancer, cardiac and lung disease, diabetes, and Crohn's disease.

- Increase in the surgical capacity for joint replacement at the St. John's hospitals.

- Current development of a Provincial Long-term Care and Supportive Services Policy Framework. This includes exploring ways to increase supportive housing alternatives for seniors and expand home care services.

- Establishment of updated provincial standards for long-term nursing care.

- Consideration of a seniors perspective within the following policy initiatives of government:

    - Provincial Wellness Plan
    - Framework for Mental Health and Addictions Services
    - Poverty Reduction Strategy
    - Oral Health Strategy
    - Violence Prevention Initiative

Much has been done and together we will achieve much more!

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

There will be many opportunities over the coming months to have your voice heard and contribute to the development of A Healthy Aging Framework for Newfoundland and Labrador. First, we are holding a series of public consultations around the province, culminating with a Provincial Forum during Seniors Month in June. We invite you to come out and participate when we come to your area! Please contact us through one of the channels below, in order to register.

There are also other ways that you can provide input. Individuals or organizations are invited to send written submissions or complete the attached Feedback Form and return it to us at:

Aging and Seniors Division
Department of Health and Community Services
PO Box 8700
St. John's, NL
A1B 4J6

Telephone : 1-888-494-2266
Fax: 1-709-729-6737
e-mail: healthyaging@gov.nl.ca
website: www.health.gov.nl.ca/health

FEEDBACK FORM

Please tell us what you think

Vision and Principles

1. Does the Vision for Healthy Aging on page nine speak to your vision for healthy aging?

2. Do the guiding principles speak to your guiding principles for a healthy aging society?

Recognition of Older Persons

3. How can we as a society foster a positive image of aging?

4. What will relationships between generations look like in the future?

5. How do seniors contribute to your community or organization? How could they contribute differently in the future?

6. Does your community or organization recognize the contributions of seniors? If so, how?

Celebrating Diversity

7. How can we recognize and support diversity in our aging population?

8. What is unique about older women? About older men?

9. What are the differences that exist among seniors?

10. What are the experiences of seniors of urban areas and those of rural and remote areas?

Supportive Communities

11. What areas of lifelong learning are important to you, and why?

12. How can individuals, families and communities support seniors, in their homes and communities?

13. How can we prepare for an aging population, taking into account parental care, as well as child care?

14. How can your organization, community or business plan for an aging population?

Financial and Personal Security

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Health and Community Services

21. How do we best ensure that programs and services are fiscally sustainable and accessible?

22. How should we provide our health and community services to best meet the needs of an aging population?

23. How do we envision the delivery of health and community services and programs for seniors, in rural or remote, and urban areas?

Thank you for taking the time to share your ideas!

PUBLIC CONSULTATION SCHEDULE

Locations and times will be announced in local newspapers.

Date	Community
Burin Peninsula	
March 15	Marystown
Clarenville - Bonavista	
March 16	Bonavista
March 17	Clarenville
Avalon Peninsula	
March 24	Carbonear
March 31	St. John's
March 31	Mount Pearl
Gander - New-Wes-Valley	
April 18	Gander
April 19	New Wes Valley
Labrador	
April 21	Happy Valley -Goose Bay
Grand Falls-Windsor - Baie Verte - Harbour Breton	
April 26	Grand Falls-Windsor
April 27	Baie Verte
April 28	Harbour Breton
Corner Brook - Rocky Harbour	
May 1	Rocky Harbour
May 2	Corner Brook
Stephenville - Port aux Basques	
May 3	Stephenville
St. Anthony - Port au Choix	
May 11	St. Anthony
Labrador	
May 12	L'Anse-au-Clair
Provincial Forum	**St. John's June 7**

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